

EMAIL #1: MARCH 22 - Is your self care sustainable?

CONVERTKIT TAGS: CALM / NEW MOMS

Subject Line: Is your self-care sustainable?

Hi, [FNAME],

Which is more restorative in the long run: Splurging on a luxurious 4-hour spa package once or twice a year? Or 30 blissful minutes a day of pure, uninterrupted solitude? This isn't a trick question. Self-care is meant to keep your reserves high, so you avoid utter depletion altogether.

Self-care shouldn't feel like adding another thing to your plate. If the stress of trying to get to yoga class on time means it's going to take you at least half the class time just to ratchet down from that, maybe going to a yoga class isn't the thing you need. Maybe you can do some stretches while your toddler plays at the park instead. Two birds, one stone.

Sometimes the best kind of self-care is simply scratching something off your list. We often feel like we need to do it all, but really, will the world fall apart if you decide re-organizing your closet isn't a priority? Making those executive decisions can feel really good.

The real takeaway here: Keep it simple. Keep it doable. And do it often.

One last thing before I go:

I'm trying an experiment. For the next 30 days, I'll be sending you a short note offering some practical tips or food for thought to you each day. You are currently subscribed to receive ALL content from Happy With Baby. If you don't want to receive some or all of what I'm sharing, please update your interests by clicking the category you prefer:

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EMAIL #5: MARCH 26 - Breathing exercise

TAGS: CALM

Subject Line: One of the quickest ways to calm is also the easiest to try.

Hi, [FNAME],

When's the last time you paid attention to your breathing?

Our breath is so automatic, we can easily get away with not ever giving it a thought over the course of a day. Obviously, that's a good thing. It keeps us alive. But the bad part is that it means that our breathing patterns become reactive to stress, and this has a way of increasing our stress response in the body.

But, did you know that the breath is also one of the most direct and immediate ways to soothe the vagus nerve and our limbic system?

(I don't want to get too sciency on you here--all you really need to know is that the limbic system is the animal part of our brain that controls our emotions, the vagus nerve monitors our heart rate, breathing, and digestion, and both together turn our "fight, flight, or freeze" response on or off.)

Take a moment right now to just observe your breath. If it's broken-up or short and fast, your body is probably also pumping stress hormones into your system. Instead what we want is slow and smooth. That will keep your nervous system calm and steady, and your mind focused, so you can respond to whatever comes your way, instead of just reacting.

Now try calming your nervous system with this super easy breathing technique:

1. Take a nice, slow, smooth inhale, counting to 4 as you breathe in.
2. When you get to the "top" of your breath, hold for 4 counts.
3. Exhale nice and slow, counting to 4 as you breathe out.
4. At the end of your out breath, hold for 4 counts.
5. Repeat these steps 5-6 times.

There. Feel any better?

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EMAIL #7: March 28 - Don't wait til a crisis to try a breathing or stress redux technique.

TAGS: CALM

Subject Line: You can't just keep a calming technique in your back pocket. Here's why.

Hi, [FNAME],

A couple of days ago, I sent you a four-square breathing technique that helps to calm your nervous system. It's super easy to do and very effective....

But, there's a catch:

It's only REALLY effective if you think to do it in a crisis. If a technique isn't immediately accessible to you in the moment when stress levels rise, then what's the point?

The takeaway:

Don't wait until a crisis to learn and master a breathing or stress reduction technique. And don't try one today and then forget about it tomorrow. When it really counts, you're not going to think to do it if you haven't made it a habit.

Instead, make it a daily practice while the stakes are low, so that when sh*t *really* hits the fan, it's already like second nature.

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EMAIL #9: March 30 - Sex/Intimacy ebbs & flows in a longterm relationship.

TAGS: CALM / NEW MOMS / ALL PARENTS

Subject Line: Sex doesn't stay the same for very long.

Hi, [FNAME],

Even if the sex you're having looks the same as it always has, how you or your partner feel about it might not stay the same forever.

If you've been with your partner for a while, then you already probably know that sex and intimacy ebbs and flows over the course of a longterm relationship.

What excites you now might not do it for you later. What sex provides you with now (pleasure, adventure, creativity, security, connection, comfort, distraction, stress relief, healing...) might not be what you need from it later.

There will be times when sex isn't even on the table. Literally or figuratively!

One of you might be too exhausted, too stressed, too busy, too distracted. One of you might be grieving a loss or traveling for work or in a rough patch in your relationship. Or maybe you just brought a new baby home or are recovering from major surgery.

All of this is part of what makes us human.

Just as your own needs and interests in sex and intimacy evolve over time, so will your partner's. You won't always be interested in it at the same time.

What matters is: Are you two talking about it?

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EMAIL #11: APRIL 1 - Dad is not a postpartum plan.

TAGS: NEW MOMS

Subject Line: This has been on my mind lately.

Hi, [FNAME],

Momma, if you're pregnant, there's something I need you to understand:

Dad is not a postpartum plan.

What I mean by this is simple: You two can't do it all by yourself, and you shouldn't have to.

In this day in age, we put so many expectations on our partners....

Lover.

Best friend.

Provider.

Personal accountant.

In-home chef.

Landscape artist.

Dog walker.

Teacher.

Therapist.

Partner in crime.

(Maybe your partner doesn't do all of these exact things--you can fill in the blanks. But you see where I'm going here.)

It wasn't all that long ago that marriages were purely for financial security and childbearing. And I'm in no way suggesting we go back to that, but you gotta admit, that does simplify things a bit.

The point is, we are designed as social beings. We rely on each other for survival. Maybe we don't live in small tribes anymore, but our social dependency is no less true today.

It's just our expectations have changed. And I'll be honest, they don't quite match up with our true needs.

Becoming a parent is HARD. We aren't meant to do this alone. And truly, there's often no good reason to try doing it alone if you don't have to.

In recent years, I've been surprised (and a bit alarmed) by what I see as a growing trend: Expecting parents who don't think they need birthing classes.

Moms who say, "Well, my husband will be supporting me during the delivery, so we'll be fine." Parents who don't see the need for having a circle of support surrounding them after baby arrives.

On the one hand, this is a real positive. I take it as a sign that Dads' presence and involvement in pregnancy, birth, and new parenthood is increasing. And I couldn't be happier about that. Dads are so, so important.

But to say that having dad there will be "enough" is worrisome to me.

Because there's just so much you can't anticipate until you're in it. Like complications during birth. Or just how intense that sleep deprivation will be. Or that you might not love your baby right away like you expected to. (Yes, this is normal.)

And I'm guessing that most dads--as supportive and loving as they are--are not trained in dealing with infant feeding issues or postpartum mood disorders or health care advocacy (among many other things).

Just like you, they can't clone themselves to multitask dinner prep while running out to buy diapers and giving you a break from the baby so you can shower.

So, yeah. A present and involved dad is AMAZING. And also, he's not a complete postpartum plan.

Please don't put that kind of pressure on your relationship. Let others help.

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EMAIL #16: April 6 - Back to basics 1:1 human connection. Keep it simple.

TAGS: CALM / NEW MOMS

Subject Line: What's the matter? Motherhood got your tongue?

Hi, [FNAME],

Let's talk about making friends as an adult. It's so hard, right?

If you're no longer in high school or college, it can be hard to make real connections very quickly.

And, of course, this can depend somewhat on the social culture of the city you live in. Some say it's easy to become fast friends with people in Los Angeles, for example, but that the relationships are flaky, self-serving and short-lived. In Minneapolis, people joke about their "Minnesota Nice" culture, saying that people will stop and give you directions to just about anywhere... except to their own house.

And yet, people do manage to make real, lasting friendships there, in the suburbs, small towns, and everywhere else.

You know what else has a crazy effect on making new friends? Becoming a mom.

(If I had a dollar for every mom that has told me how hard it is to make other mom friends... Well, let's just say I'd be writing this email from some faraway beach right now, instead of my humble office.)

I don't know if it's the mom brain ("All I can think about is wet diaper counts and nipple treatments and feeding times! What did I ever talk about with anyone before this? I can't remember!") or the sleep deprivation ("Wanna watch a movie with me? I made popcorn! Zzzzzzzzzzz...") or identity issues ("I don't know who I am anymore."), but working up the nerve to start a conversation with another mom can be really challenging.

And even if a conversation does get started, then what? How do you turn that into a friendship?

It can all feel insurmountable. And that's exactly the problem.

We need to take the pressure off and get back to basics. So, the next time you're at the playground or a cafe, try striking up a conversation with another mom in a different way.

Here are my tips for you:

1. **Let go of expectations.** Stop worrying about how you'll come off to the other person or whether a connection could become something more. Just practice being in the moment and getting comfortable with sticking your neck out.
2. **Be curious.** Don't worry so much about having something interesting to say. Just be a good listener, ask questions, and resist jumping to conclusions.
3. **Start with simple.** Surprisingly, some of the best conversations can come from simply asking a person where they're from. "Did you grow up around here?" can draw out some interesting conversation about how people came to be where they are now and what their influences and drives are.
4. **Use an open-ended follow-up.** "Wow, what was that like?" is an invitation for them to go deeper into their story. This is also an opportunity for you to pull from your own experiences, like "That sounds so much like when I _____. " or "Wow, I've never done/been/considered that before! I've always _____."
5. **Say "Thank you."** I think we can often forget to acknowledge the gift in connecting, even if it's fleeting and you never see this person again. Practice thanking them for the chat. You might even find an opportunity to exchange phone numbers.

I think as moms we can often default to asking about each other's kids or some other mom related thing first. And there's nothing wrong with that--especially if you find that you have something in common there, it can feel like you've found a new BFF.

The problem is that the world of motherhood can feel like a very judgmental place. And if you haven't first connected with someone to see your shared humanity, you can run the risk of judging or being judged before you both even know each other.

Not only that, but you can only talk about your kids for so long before you eventually get bored. You might even walk away from it feeling like you don't know the other mother at all. And maybe your kids like playing with each other, but what if you two moms don't really like each other?

Ultimately, as long as you're trying, that's the main thing.

But if you've struggled to make connections or have felt too self-conscious to even try, maybe just try what I'm suggesting instead.

Keep at it, momma. It gets easier.

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EMAIL #19: April 9 - Feeling rushed getting kids to daycare. How to simplify, when to slow down.

TAGS: CALM / NEW MOMS

Subject Line: Always in a rush

Hi, [FNAME],

When you become a mom, something funny happens around our concept of time. Which is to say, babies and small kids have basically ZERO concept of time, and we adults are ruled by the clock.

It can be a huge stressor.

You need to be at work by 9am. The kids need to be at daycare by 8am. But you can't schedule a poopy diaper for a more convenient time. There's no rushing a toddler who just has to check out that trail of ants on the way to the car. And lumpy socks inside velcro sneakers? Forget about it. It's an immediate crisis.

But you? You've got that important meeting you need to prep for. You can't be late one more time this week. You won't have time to drive through for your favorite coffee yet again. You might even have to stay late at work now or run those errands on your lunch break. And how many tardies is it again that add up to an absence at your oldest's elementary school?

Ugh, it's just too much sometimes. The rushing, the feeling like you're failing, the guilt for getting snappy with your kids...

So let's make this a little easier.

Simplify for the Important Stuff:

Sometimes, unfortunately, you really CANNOT be late. And of course we can't expect our little ones to understand this if they're not developed enough to read a clock. So, instead of feeling guilty for nagging and hustling them, simplify so there's less hustling to do. I'm a big fan of doing as much prep the night before as possible to make morning routines smoother, even if it means letting your kids sleep in tomorrow's clothes (yes, this feels weird at first). I also love simplifying errands by having things delivered or removing things from our to-do list altogether. Experiment with different things to see what makes your life easier: Try keeping a small plastic storage container in the car with diapers and wipes in them, so you don't have to stress over what's missing from the diaper bag. Lay out your outfit the night before. Create make-ahead

breakfasts over the weekend that you can grab and go on weekdays. (And, really, dry shampoo brands should send me a kick-back for as much as I sing their praises!) If there's one thing about parenthood that I know for sure, it's that it sooner or later makes every one of us moms creative geniuses when it comes to being resourceful and prioritizing what really matters.

When it's not so important, let it go:

For all of our creative genius, this is where we parents can really struggle. Sometimes we don't have to rush. We don't always have to try so hard. But, this means we have to really pay attention to our impulses and question whether they're always serving us. Like, if it's your day off and you're walking your little one home from the park and on that walk they stop to pick up every leaf or stick they can find, can you resist the urge to hurry them along? Can you let it be OK if dinner gets started 10 minutes later than planned? Can you notice that impulse in yourself that makes you want to keep moving? Can you take a cue from your little one and enjoy the moment? In other words, are there times when you can give yourself permission to slow down?

And, above all and whenever possible, let yourself off the hook.

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EMAIL #20: April 10 - Your babies need the best of you, not the most of you.

TAGS: NEW MOMS

Subject Line: This is becoming a catchphrase of mine.

Hi, [FNAME],

“Your babies need the best of you, not the most of you.”

I say that a lot lately, but it dawned on me that you might be wondering what exactly that means. So, I thought I should explain.

What your babies don't need is:

- A supermom.
- A mom who does it all.
- A mom who is quietly suffering from untreated depression or anxiety.
- A mom who is too afraid or proud to ask for what she needs.
- A mom who can't relax or take a break.
- A mom who pushes for perfection.
- A mom who puts her relationships on the back burner.
- A mom who is around 100% of the time but is only present in the moment 5% of the time.
- A mom who feels guilty for being away from home so much.
- A mom who snaps at her kids all the time because she just can't catch a break.

What your babies do need:

- A healthy mom.
- A well-rested mom.
- A supported mom.
- A mom who feels capable.
- A mom who feels satisfied with her life, career, and relationships.
- A mom who feels good.

If that means that you have to put your baby in daycare so that you can go back to work, this is taking care of your baby. And if that means that you have to hand your kids over to a sitter now and then, so you can get some time to nurture yourself, this is taking care of your baby.

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EMAIL #22: April 12 - When you and your partner disagree on how to parent.

TAGS: NEW MOMS / ALL PARENTS

Subject Line: When you and your partner disagree

Hi, [FNAME],

When you and your partner fundamentally disagree over parenting decisions, it can be really hard to make any headway on an issue. It can feel really divisive. Irritations and resentments can fester.

Sometimes it's about compromise. But many times, it's not even about the thing you and your partner can't agree on--it's about the thing *underneath* the thing.

Issues that have been there already will surface over seemingly unrelated things if you don't work them out.

Here's an example:

I know a couple (not clients of mine) who had a disagreement about whether or not to use cloth diapers on their first-born that spiraled out of control. She felt like he was being ridiculous and controlling in his refusal and that he didn't share the same values she did. He felt like she wasn't hearing him and didn't value his perspective. Both felt that the conversation had become impossible. It took them many months to work through the issue and realize that it wasn't actually about the diapering method at all.

At first glance, it might seem silly that they started seeing a couples therapist over a cloth diaper disagreement. But again, it's almost never about the thing. It's the thing underneath the thing.

It isn't about winning, though sometimes it feels that way. (Sometimes it can even *become* about winning, even if that wasn't a part of it before.) But when it comes to parenting, there is no winning when you two are battling each other.

If compromise feels impossible, try curiosity instead. Ask your partner questions about why they feel what they feel. Try to understand their motivations. Uncover what their real values are or what they're battling inside when it appears they're battling you. You might not win every battle this way, but your relationship will win in the long run.

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EMAIL #26: April 16 - Body Check-In: How does stress manifest for you?

TAGS: CALM

Subject line: How does stress and anxiety feel in your body?

Hi, [FNAME],

When we're stressed, overwhelmed, and overstretched, it's so easy to not notice the signals our bodies are sending us. And if this state is your norm, you might not even know or remember what it feels like to NOT feel stressed.

But our bodies are smart. They're constantly responding to our surroundings and our thoughts. Our bodies are constantly trying to communicate what we need to us. And if we consistently stuff down or ignore what our bodies are telling us, our bodies will respond in one of two ways:

Either our bodies learn that we aren't going to respond and so they stop sending us warning signals (which can cause more harmful damage in the long run) or by speaking louder (so we have no choice but to pay attention).

Remember that our nervous systems can communicate to us in a variety of ways, including:

- Pain or discomfort
- Frequent colds or illnesses
- Vulnerability to injury
- Panic attacks
- Insomnia, exhaustion, or tiredness
- Depression
- Forgetfulness
- Irritability
- Hunger or lack of appetite
- Disinterest
- Inability to focus

So what is your body communicating to you right now?

Try this body scan exercise:

1. Find a comfortable seat or lay down.
2. Set a timer for 1 or 2 minutes.
3. Close your eyes.

4. Bring your awareness to your toes, feet and ankles. Notice whether you're clenching or gripping anywhere in your feet. Try wiggling your toes or rolling your ankles, then tell your feet to relax.
5. Move up to your shins and calves. Tell your calf muscles to release and relax. Then move up to your knees and do the same.
6. Continue all the way up your body until you reach the crown of your head. Take special care to also include your vital organs (especially your stomach, lungs and heart), arms, fingers, your facial muscles, eye muscles, and jaw, etc.

Were you able to notice where you were holding any tension? Do you notice any pain or tightness anywhere? Do you notice any other signs of stress (fear, dread, avoidance, sadness, etc.)?

If you do this consistently enough, you'll begin to notice patterns for how your body typically responds to stress. And once you know what those are, you can implement strategies to undo those patterns.

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EMAIL #31 CTA feedback/Join FB group/unsubscribe

Subject Line: Are you loving these emails?

Hi, [FNAME],

I can't believe 30 days has come and gone already. This little experiment went by so fast! How did you like the emails I've been sending out?

"Yes, I love it!"

If you're loving the email content lately, I'd love to hear what's been resonating with you! To shoot me an email, just click 'Reply'!

Also, consider joining my Facebook group, [Happy With Baby Community](#), to keep the conversation going with a virtual circle of other supportive moms--myself included!

"It's good, but hit or miss for me."

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"Meh, it's not for me."

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Thank you for making space in your inbox for me each week, [FNAME].

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